

Isaac Meason House  
(Mount Braddock)  
U.S. Route 119  
Dunbar Township  
Fayette County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5475

HABS  
PA  
26-DUBA  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ISAAC MEASON HOUSE  
(Mount Braddock)

HABS No. PA-5475

Location: U.S. Route 119  
Dunbar Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania

Significance: The house served as the primary residence for Isaac Meason, an early entrepreneur and iron master in western Pennsylvania. This structure is the most sophisticated building in the region from the period (1802), and the only one constructed entirely in stone in a seven part Palladian plan.

Description: The Meason House is located on a four-acre site which was carefully landscaped, consistent with the English design principles of the period. The house faces northwest across a raised circular lawn defined by a low, cut-stone ashlar masonry wall with steps and entrance pylons. A stone wellhead and carriage drive also distinguish the main entrance.

The house itself is composed of seven parts according to a Palladian scheme. The two-and-one-half story main block is flanked by lower hyphens, end pavilions and outbuildings, centered on an axis with the entrance gate. All structures (except the outbuildings) are faced with coursed ashlar gray-brown sandstone with limestone dressing.

The main block is fifty feet wide and twenty feet deep. The symmetrically arranged, five-bay facade is accentuated by a slightly projecting pedimented central pavilion containing the three center bays (including the main entrance).

The living and entertaining quarters are contained within the main building, while the wings contain service and work spaces. Both the front and rear entrances open into a large, center hall off of which the first floor rooms can be entered. Two rooms are located to either side of the center hall in a classic double-pile, center-hall fashion. The upper floors are reached by the center-hall stair, which is open to the third floor.

Alterations to both the interior and exterior of the Meason house have been minor. Modern utilities were added in the twentieth century with little effect on the original character. The house retains a great deal of architectural integrity.

History: The Isaac Meason House is located just to the west of the Allegheny Mountains on Mount Braddock, land which was previously held by Christopher Gist. Isaac Meason (1743-1818) was an early exploiter of the rich iron, timber and coal resources available in Pennsylvania during the late eighteenth century. He established Union Furnace and Forge in 1791 (regarded as the first commercially successful iron furnace in that region) and built the first rolling

mill in 1816 in the western part of the state. He was also involved in a number of other successful business and industrial ventures.

In 1802, Meason commissioned Adam Wilson to design and construct a residence utilizing a seven-part Palladian plan. A Scots-Irish architect builder, Wilson is reputed to have been brought to the United States by Meason.

The substantial house which resulted from their collaboration is an appropriate statement of the success which Meason had achieved by the early nineteenth century. This structure is the most sophisticated building in the region dating from the early nineteenth century. In addition, the Meason House is the only Palladian plan house of the era to be built in seven parts entirely of dressed stone.

Sources:

Caller, Carmel. Isaac Meason: The Man, Ironmaster and Businessman, His Mansion. Pennsylvania: The Connellsville Historical Society, Inc., 1975.

Deibler, Dan G., PH&MC and George E. Thomas, Ph.D "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form-National Historic Landmark Nomination Form", December 1990.

Ellis, Franklin (ed) History of Fayette County. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1882.

Stotz, Charles Morse. The Architectural Heritage of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966.